

# THE USE OF REWARD IN TRAINING HABITS OF TIDINESS AND DEPORTMENT.

BY E. FROST.

The possibility of reward implies also the possibility of punishment, and as both are material and arbitrary they certainly do not appeal to the best side of any nature; they also are attended by a great danger—that of laying the foundations of a wrong view of life. A material consequence in the shape of reward or punishment diverts the mind from the natural consequence of a good or evil action, and in time we have the character that will always look for the material gain or loss and be governed by that. His mother offers the boy some chocolate if his play cupboard is kept tidy; his brother offers to share a coveted toy if he will take part in some forbidden joy. The cupboard is tidy, the mischief is done, and the child is no better for one than he is worse for the other, because in each case the motive was the reward, and not the desire to do right or wrong.

Let us imagine for a moment the ideally educated child who has been trained to obey from the first, whose impulses for good have been encouraged, and who is governed by all manner of good habits. He shows an inclination to be untidy. His mother notices, draws his attention to the fact, and by appealing to his sense of beauty—children are such worshippers of beauty as a rule—and his soldier instinct of fighting for the right, she enables him to see the desirability of tidiness, and with her help and his own determination to do right the tidy habit is soon started. Now let us consider another case. The child, as before, starts the bad habit; on the whole he is a good child, governed somewhat too much, perhaps, by his love of material gain. His mother would like to cure the bad habit in the ideal way, but finds that her appeal is made in vain; the boy is uninspired, and the habit pursues its way unchecked. Then his mother says: "If you

are quite tidy all the week you shall have a prize every Saturday." "What will you give me?" says the boy, giving words to the unconscious thought: "I will do it if the reward be worth the trouble." Tom, the Waterbaby, loved the sweets given as rewards by Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid to such an extent that he found out where she kept them, and stole all he could find.

Our great difficulty in dealing with children lies in the fact that they so often come to us more or less spoilt. It is just because of this fact, viz., that all children are not trained upwards when they come to us, that we have to abandon to a certain extent our ideal of the natural consequence being the reward or punishment of the act. This brings us to the fact that we must choose a middle way, acknowledging that there are cases when a reward or stimulus is never necessary, as with the aforementioned ideally educated child, and there are cases when it is necessary, as with spoilt children.

Reward, then, may be used, but only occasionally, carefully, after much thoughtful planning, and of course not until we are quite sure that the more ideal treatment is useless.

Under what conditions may rewards be given? I think under two.

1. With spoilt children; it must be made to take as insignificant a place as possible, and the child should see that his teacher delights in the power of the new habit he is gaining and thinks it of more value than the reward.

2. Unexpected rewards; these, I think, may be used with discretion in all cases, and would probably be found to have most effect with the child who had been making endeavours for right's sake. It would prove to him that his teacher appreciated his efforts, the prize being a material proof of the immaterial reward, viz., the attainment of the desired habit.

I now come to deal especially with the two habits we are considering. Although the two habits of tidiness and deportment are connected to a certain extent, their training and



the rewards offered must be taken separately; but one training will help the other in many minor ways. The causes of bad habits in these directions are the same as untidiness or a bad deportment may be due to:—

1. Physical weakness, causing a general disinclination to make any exertion, whether it be the trouble of putting the article no longer required in its place, or the will decision to hold the body well. This must be treated medically, as the rather weak will of a child is hopelessly overbalanced by his very weak body.

2. A bad habit arising, not from any physical or moral disability, but from want of care, the child being willing to hold himself well, but not successful in his attempts. This case should need no reward as a stimulus; but if the bad habit were very strong an unexpected reward would be a pleasant surprise, and have good effect.

3. Laziness, that deadly habit so difficult to cure, because the malady attacks body and mind. The mind must first be roused, then the body, and both be kept stimulated so that in this case a definite reward, held out and worked for until the first stages of the new good habit are passed, would be of great use.

What rewards may we use?

They should be as far as possible dependent upon the actions that earn them. We will think of rewards in connection with each habit separately; but there are two to call to mind first—praise and promotion.

What rewards may be used in training a habit of tidiness?

Untidy children show their bad habit in:—

1. Their persons; a reward might be offered for a certain standard of neatness reached and maintained. I think the winning of tassels as an honour to be added to the scout patrol badge might be adapted to the particular needs of various members. These tassels make excellent rewards, because their material value is nothing, and yet to the child

they are precious as an honour and a visible proof of his attainment.

2. Disorder in rooms, drawers, shelves, etc.; a housewifery tassel would be a suitable honour for rooms, etc., kept tidy for a term. Tidiness in this direction and personal tidiness might have one reward.

3. Untidy in handiwork; again a tassel for handicrafts applies.

4. Untidy minds; these are best treated by the teacher alone. There is no need to put all particulars of his failing before the child, as he will be discouraged; so here no reward is needed.

5. Untidy in deportment; this would be treated especially in drills, and is really included in the training of good habits of deportment.

Other rewards should be of an æsthetic nature—pictures to beautify a room; statuettes, especially those showing beautiful poses; books; to be allowed as a privilege to help arrange flowers—this would cultivate taste; a gift of seeds or plants for a garden tidily kept. One can easily think of many such occasions and rewards.

We will now consider deportment alone.

The training of physical good habits theoretically seems to be one of the easiest, because there are so many means, and nature steps in to help so readily. Drill, dancing, ball exercises, skipping, Indian clubs, exercises with light dumbbells, and even in their play—running, jumping, climbing, often riding, swimming, rowing, and games, all these are so much to the fore now that the temptation to be lazy and lethargic should have little power. But practically this training is the most difficult because of the unnatural conditions under which children sit so much at lessons, when the good effect of their activities is counteracted. Children who poke their heads and stoop are very apt to make spasmodic attempts at holding themselves well; they pull up when told and when they remember, but forget and relax



after a minute. Scout tassels as an honour presented after a drill display before parents would be a fair reward, the winning of the tassel also depending upon general deportment throughout the term.

Deportment in its largest sense includes behaviour. Good manners is a very wide and scattered subject, entirely composed of a little here and a little there; its very indefiniteness makes a suggestion of general reward impossible, and I am very glad, for good manners should be unconscious, and to offer a reward would be a great mistake. Children copy the manners of those around them quite unconsciously; if they are with polite people they learn to be polite, both in their general intercourse with others and in their own private manners, such as table manners.

Finally, to quote Herbert Spencer: "Remember that the aim of your discipline is to produce a self-governing being; not to produce a being governed by others." This quotation alone makes us view the subject of the offering of reward as a dangerous one. Personally I disapprove of the frequent use of reward, though in this paper I have suggested many cases when it might be used as a last resource. Here, again, I would insist on the fact that it may be a prop to begin with; but if it is still a prop at the finish, then time and power have been wasted which may never be recovered; the self-governing being is not there, and unless the will be naturally strong the power of self-government will always be lacking. A comparison between the stimulus of reward and the stimulus given by a fine character, and the unconscious power that character yields because of its force and enthusiasm, makes us think of that side of the question brought forward by those who are against the offering of rewards when they say: "Reward is as much as punishment the *refuge* of the weak."

## DISCUSSION.

### (a) *The Cure of Contradictoriness.*

Miss Loveday thought that peevishness was mostly due to ill-health, and that when the cause was removed the contradictoriness would be found gone also.

Miss E. M. Saunders pointed out that children were apt to trade on their ill-health.

Miss O. Thorp advised some energetic employment to induce forgetfulness of self.

Miss Parish, on the contrary, said that when children were peevish they required more rest.

Miss M. E. Davis said she found that children did not question orders, but statements.

Miss Owen: A child who quibbles should be ignored.

Miss Smeeton: Sometimes a middle course is possible; it could be pointed out to a child that there was room for two opinions, and we must respect each other's.

Miss M. F. Evans: The very first thing required for dealing with contradictoriness is tact.

Miss Smeeton: And the second sense of humour.

### (b) *The Use of Reward, etc.*

Miss Stubbs: To form the habit of tidiness a child should be constantly supervised.

Miss Bernau said that she had found Miss Mason's own plan effective; she left her card in an untidy desk.

Miss Smeeton thought that rewards should not be given for tidiness; but helps to tidiness might be given in the shape of more shelf or cupboard room.

Many students agreed that example was the best inducement to tidiness, and

Miss Allen said that if rewards were given a long enough time should elapse so that the habit had a chance of being established before the reward was given.